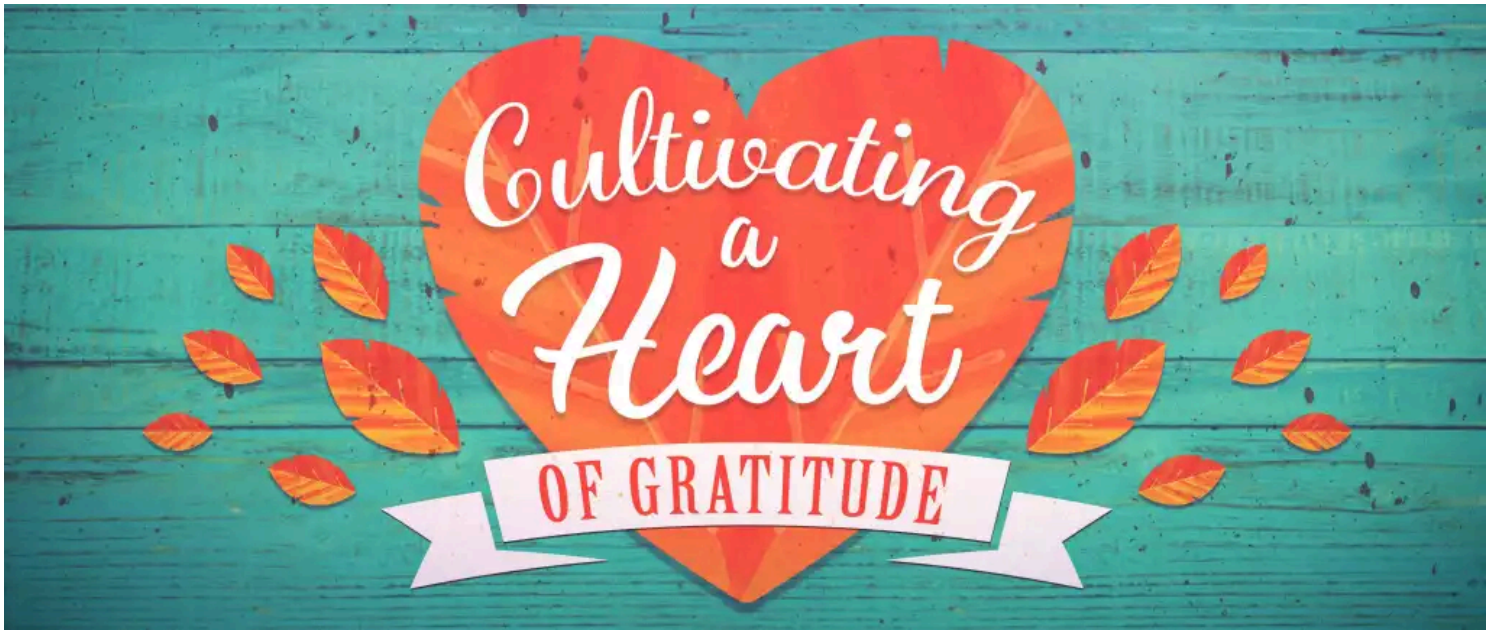
CULTIVATING THE HEART



by **Deva Hardeep Singh** | ***Dharma Seeds Yoga Press*** | 06 June 2023

CULTIVATING THE HEART

Cultivating good-will (metta) gives another dimension to the practice of Insight. ***Meditation naturally teaches patience and tolerance, or at least it shows the importance of these qualities***. So you may well wish to develop a more friendly and caring attitude towards yourself and other people. In meditation, you can cultivate good-will very realistically.

Focus attention on the breath, which you will now be using as the means of spreading kindness and goodwill. Begin with yourself, with your body. Visualize the breath as a light, or see your awareness as being a warm ray, and gradually sweep it over your body. Lightly focus your attention on the center of the chest, around the heart region. As you breathe in, direct patient kindness towards yourself, perhaps with the thought, “May I be well”, or “Peace”. As you breathe out, let the mood of that thought, or the awareness of light, spread outwards from the heart, through the body, through the mind, and beyond yourself. “May others be well.”

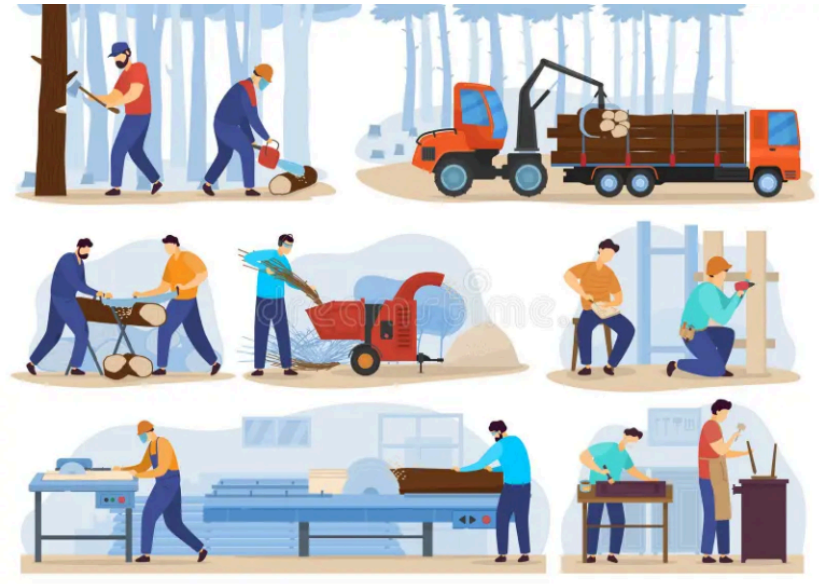
If you are experiencing negative states of mind, breathe in the qualities of tolerance and forgiveness. Visualizing the breath as having a healing color may be helpful. On the out-breath, let go — of any stress, worry, or negativity — and extend the sense of release through the body, the mind, and beyond, as before.

This practice can form all or part of a period of meditation — you have to judge for yourself what is appropriate. The calming effect of meditating with a kindly attitude is good for beginning a sitting, but there will no doubt be times to use this approach for long periods, to go deeply into the heart.

Always begin with what you are aware of, even if it seems trivial or confusing. Let your mind rest calmly on that — whether it's boredom, an aching knee, or the frustration of not feeling particularly kindly. Allow these to be; practice being at peace with them. Recognize and gently put aside any tendencies toward laziness, doubt, or guilt

Peacefulness can develop into a very nourishing kindness towards yourself, if you first of all fully accept the presence of what you dislike. Keep the attention steady, and open the heart to whatever you experience. This does not imply approval of negative states, but allows them a space wherein they can come and go.

Generating goodwill toward the world beyond yourself follows much the same pattern. **A simple way to spread kindness is to work in stages**. Start with yourself, joining the sense of loving acceptance to the movement of the breath. "May I be well?" Then, reflect on people you love and respect, and wish them well, one by one. Move on to friendly acquaintances, then to those towards whom you feel indifferent. "May they be well." Finally, bring to mind those people you fear or dislike, and continue to send out wishes of goodwill.



A simple way to spread kindness is to work in stages. (photo by ID 177392048 © Seahorse Vector | Dreamstime.com)

This meditation can expand, in a movement of compassion, to include all people in the world, in their many circumstances. And remember, you don't have to feel that you love everyone to wish them well!

Kindness and compassion originate from the same source of good will, and they **broaden the mind beyond the purely personal perspective**. If you're not always trying to make things go the way you want them to; if you're more accepting and receptive to yourself and others as they are, compassion arises by itself. Compassion is the natural sensitivity of the heart.

Insight meditation, also known as vipassana, is a type of meditation that focuses on developing awareness of the present moment. It is a powerful tool that can be used to heal the emotional heart.

The emotional heart is the seat of our emotions, such as love, joy, sadness, anger, and fear. When we are hurt or traumatized, these emotions can become trapped in our emotional heart, causing us pain and suffering.

Insight meditation can help us to release these trapped emotions and heal our emotional heart. It does this by helping us to see our thoughts and emotions as they are, without judgment. This allows us to let go of our attachment to these thoughts and emotions, which can free us from their grip.

How Insight Meditation Works

Insight meditation is a simple practice, but it can be challenging at first. The key is to be patient and consistent with your practice.

Here are some basic steps on how to do insight meditation:

1. Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed.
2. Sit in a comfortable position, either on the floor or in a chair.
3. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths.
4. Focus your attention on your breath. Notice the feeling of the air as it enters and leaves your body.
5. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to your breath.
6. Continue meditating for 5-10 minutes.

As you become more experienced with insight meditation, you can gradually increase the length of your meditation sessions.

Benefits of Insight Meditation

Insight meditation has been shown to have a number of benefits, including:

- **Reduced stress:** Insight meditation can help to reduce stress by teaching you how to control your thoughts and emotions.
- **Improved focus:** Insight meditation can help to improve your focus by training your mind to concentrate on one thing at a time.
- **Increased mindfulness:** Insight meditation can help you to become more mindful, or aware of the present moment. This can lead to a number of benefits, such as improved emotional regulation, better decision-making, and increased creativity.
- **Improved sleep:** Insight meditation can help to improve your sleep by reducing stress and promoting relaxation.
- **Reduced pain:** Insight meditation can help to reduce pain by activating the body's natural pain-relieving mechanisms.
- **Increased self-awareness:** Insight meditation can help you to become more aware of your thoughts, feelings, and sensations. This can lead to a greater understanding of yourself and your motivations.

- **Improved relationships:** Insight meditation can help you to improve your relationships by increasing your empathy and compassion.
- **Increased happiness:** Insight meditation can help you to increase your happiness by teaching you how to appreciate the present moment and let go of negative thoughts and emotions.

How to Integrate Insight Meditation into Your Daily Life

Insight meditation is most effective when it is done on a regular basis. The best time to meditate is in the morning, before you start your day. However, you can also meditate at other times of the day, such as before bed or during your lunch break.

If you are new to meditation, it is helpful to start with short meditation sessions. Once you have established a regular meditation practice, you can gradually increase the length of your sessions.

It is also important to find a meditation technique that works for you. There are many different types of meditation, so experiment until you find one that you enjoy.

Insight meditation can be a challenging practice, but it is also a rewarding one. With regular practice, you can learn to control your thoughts and emotions, improve your focus, and increase your mindfulness. These benefits can lead to a happier and healthier life.

Conclusion

Insight meditation is a powerful tool that can help you to heal your emotional heart. It can help you to release trapped emotions, let go of judgment, and increase your awareness of the present moment. With regular practice, insight meditation can help you to live a happier, healthier, and more fulfilling life.

If you are interested in **incorporating insight meditation into your healing from trauma**, it is **important to find a qualified teacher** who can help you to do so **safely and effectively**. You may also want to consider working with a therapist who specializes in trauma.

Here are some tips for incorporating insight meditation into your healing from trauma:

- **Start slowly:** If you are new to meditation, it is important to start slowly. Start with short meditation sessions (5-10 minutes) and gradually increase the length of your sessions as you become more comfortable with meditation.

- **Find a quiet place:** When you meditate, it is important to find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed.
- **Be comfortable:** When you meditate, it is important to be comfortable. You can sit in a chair or on the floor, whichever is more comfortable for you.
- **Focus on your breath:** When you meditate, focus on your breath. Pay attention to the feeling of the air as it enters and leaves your body.
- **Be kind to yourself:** If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to your breath. Do not judge yourself for having a wandering mind. Simply start again.

If you find that you are struggling to meditate, it is important to be patient with yourself. Meditation takes practice, and it may take some time before you are able to meditate for long periods of time without your mind wandering.

Insight meditation can be a helpful tool for healing from trauma. If you are interested in incorporating insight meditation into your healing, it is important to find a qualified teacher who can help you to do so safely and effectively. You may also want to consider working with a therapist who specializes in trauma.

I found using Insight Meditation helpful for me when first beginning my recovery in 95′. I remember before I began I read the small book **Meditation in Action** by **Chögyam Trungpa**. Streams of warm wet tears didn't stop flowing down my face as I read. This short book cut through the heart and convinced me promptly that I had shit to deal with. And yet, we have this lovely comforting, valuable tool at our hands and feet.

Meditation =Mindfulness=Yoga. These tools don't "fix" us, they assist us in processing, ridding toxicity in our bodies, and finding a way to still our minds. Same with our breath work, Pranayama. All these are like having a tool belt around your waist. You use your tools to deal with PTSD, Depression, Anger, and any emotions. They are tools. So this is why you, as a person, get to decide how and when you begin meditation, yoga, or mindfulness practices.

All spiritual practices exist in all cultures. This is why as a teacher, at Dharma Seeds Yoga, we teach for free and welcome all. Folks come in all shapes and sizes and colors. All are welcome here!

Am I fixed? Hell no! I struggle like we all do, it's called the human experience. We have to look at the "root of our questioning. Because when I hear people ask me if I'm fixed by yoga, I hear, "Can this make me perfect". As long as I breathe, as long I am in human form, there will be disappointments. But don't let your disappointments keep you from the spiritual practices that have over a 5000-year history of working on our emotional mental mind.

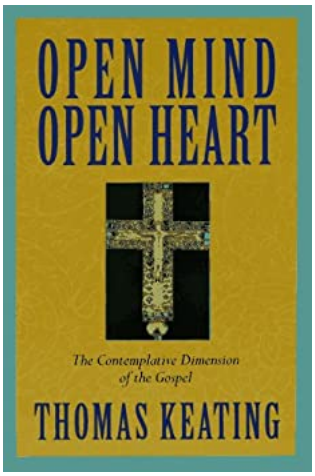
If we fame our approach to mindfulness or yoga seeking perfection, you will be disappointed. You may be pondering how I know this. Due to my trauma abuse coupled with being neurodivergent, when that term was learning disabled in my

days. (born 1962). I sought perfection cause if I did people in my life would get off my butt.

Yoga, meditation, mindfulness, prayer, singing, and any "spiritual" practice will work. It's a journey, not a destination. I had to learn through Insight Meditation to sit mindfully while I micro scoped my soul and mind. It was gruesome work but afterward, it was gone. It no longer had a hold on my body, mind, or soul. Whatever it was I was loving just sitting thinking of it. In silence, mostly in the dark too. Slowly my heart melted and a new me emerged.

Got love yourself where you are at, cause maybe that's the only love you will get that day. So always be easy on yourself. Learn to sit what makes you uncomfortable. Sit with holding it in your hands that are resting on your lap. Or wherever your hand is when you meditate. Imagine your hand holding and just looking with no thought, no judgment, no hate. Just sit.

In time it will remove the crust that trauma has hardened around your heart chakra.



Fr. Thomas Keating, a Trappist monk, was one of the founders of the **Centering Prayer movement**. Centering Prayer is a form of Christian meditation that involves sitting quietly and focusing on a word or phrase.

Fr. Keating believed that meditation could heal the heart by helping us to:

- **Let go of our attachments:** When we meditate, we learn to let go of our attachments to our thoughts, feelings, and desires. This can help us to release the pain and suffering that we often hold onto because of these attachments.
- **Open our hearts to God's love:** Meditation can help us to open our hearts to God's love. This can help us to experience a sense of peace, joy, and compassion that can heal our hearts.
- **Connect with our true selves:** Meditation can help us to connect with our true selves, which is the part of us that is made in the image and likeness of God. This can help us to experience a sense of wholeness and peace that can heal our hearts.

Fr. Keating believed that meditation is a lifelong journey, and that we can never fully arrive at our destination. However, he also believed that meditation can help us to make progress on our journey and to experience the healing that we all need.

Here are some tips for incorporating Centering Prayer into your life:

- **Find a quiet place:** When you meditate, it is important to find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed.
- **Sit comfortably:** When you meditate, it is important to sit comfortably. You can sit in a chair or on the floor, whichever is more comfortable for you.
- **Choose a word or phrase:** When you meditate, choose a word or phrase that is meaningful to you. This word or phrase can be a prayer, a mantra, or simply a single word.
- **Focus on your word or phrase:** When you meditate, focus on your word or phrase. Let your mind come back to your word or phrase whenever it wanders.
- **Meditate for 20-30 minutes:** When you first start meditating, it is helpful to meditate for 20-30 minutes at a time. As you become more comfortable with meditation, you can gradually increase the length of your sessions.
- **Be patient:** Meditation takes practice, and it may take some time before you are able to meditate for long periods of time without your mind wandering. Be patient with yourself and do not get discouraged.

Pre-Caution

While engaging in any **yoga activities, always remember**:

- **Listen to your body.** Don't push yourself too hard, and be sure to **modify poses as needed**.
- **Use props to help you.** Props can be a great way to **make poses more accessible** and to reduce the risk of injury.
- **Take breaks.** If you're feeling tired or sore, take a break from your practice.
- **Don't be afraid to ask for help.** If you're not sure how to modify a pose or if you have any concerns, ask your instructor for help.

> **Always listen to your body and modify poses as needed.** Also review on our ***website***, our guidance on using Yoga for mental health purposes.

Yin Yoga Poses for Insight Meditation

Here are some Yin Yoga poses that are good in preparing for Insight Meditation:

- **Supported Fish Pose (Matsyasana)**: This pose helps to open the chest and heart, which can promote feelings of compassion and openness. To do Supported Fish Pose, lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Place a bolster or rolled-up blanket under your hips and another

under your head. Relax your arms by your sides, palms facing up. Hold for 5-10 minutes.

https://www.fireflycommunity.com/post/2018/09/03/yoga-pose-of-the-month-supported-fish

- **Pigeon Pose (Eka Pada Rajakapotasana)**: This pose helps to open the hips and groin, which can promote feelings of relaxation and ease. To do Pigeon Pose, start on your hands and knees. Bring your right knee forward and place it behind your right wrist. Extend your left leg back behind you, keeping your left foot flexed. Lower your hips down towards the floor, keeping your back straight. Hold for 5-10 breaths, then repeat on the other side.

https://yogisanonymous.com/poses/supported-pigeon-pose-salamba-eka-pada-rajakapotasana

- **Reclining Bound Angle Pose (Supta Baddha Konasana)**: This pose helps to open the hips and groin, as well as the inner thighs and knees. To do Reclining Bound Angle Pose, lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Bring the soles of your feet together and hold your feet with your hands. Bring your knees towards your chest, then release them back down to the floor. Hold for 5-10 minutes.

Reclined Bound Angle Pose
Supta Baddha Konasana
Chin lifted slightly, eyes closed or gazing softly ahead
Chest broad
Navel active, drawing up and in towards spine
Allow knees to fall towards the earth as hips open
Arms either resting straight along side the body, perpendicular to the torso or extended above the head resting on the ground
Entire length of spine flat against the earth
Outer lateral edge of feet resting against the earth
yoga

https://yogajala.com/reclining-bound-angle-pose-supta-baddha-konasana/

- **Easy Pose (Sukhasana)**: This pose is a great way to start your Yin Yoga practice, as it helps to calm the mind and body. To do Easy Pose, sit on the floor with your legs crossed. Bring your right hand to rest on your right thigh and your left hand to rest on your left thigh. Relax your shoulders and back. Close your eyes and focus on your breath. Hold for 5-10 minutes.

Crown of the head reaching up toward the sky
Chin tucked in towards the chest slightly
Spine long and straight, back flat and upright
Core active, navel drawn up and in towards the spine
Sit bones resting on
Both calves resting
yoga

https://yogajala.com/easy-pose-sukhasana/

These are just a few examples of Yin Yoga poses that can be helpful in preparing for Insight Meditation. It is important to find poses that feel comfortable and that you can hold for a long period of time. As you practice Yin Yoga, you may find that you become more relaxed and more able to focus on your breath. This can help you to create a sense of calm and stillness that is conducive to Insight Meditation.

Research

These are scientific and academic articles on how Insight Meditation heals our hearts:

1. **Shapiro, S. L., & Carlson, L. E. (2009). The art and science of mindfulness: Integrating mindfulness into clinical practice. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 65(8), 989-1006.**

This article provides an overview of the research on mindfulness and its potential benefits for mental and physical health. The authors discuss how mindfulness can be used to increase self-awareness, reduce stress, and improve emotional

regulation. They also provide practical tips for incorporating mindfulness into clinical practice.

2. **Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84(4), 822-848.**

This article examines the benefits of mindfulness, a type of meditation that involves paying attention to the present moment without judgment. The authors review research that suggests that mindfulness can lead to a number of benefits, including increased happiness, reduced stress, and improved self-regulation.

3. **Zeidan, F., Johnson, S. K., Diamond, B. J., David, Z., Goolkasian, P., & Goolkasian, P. (2010). Mindfulness meditation improves cognition: Evidence of brief mental training. Consciousness and cognition, 19(2), 597-605.**

This study investigated the effects of mindfulness meditation on cognition. Participants were randomly assigned to either a mindfulness meditation group or a control group. The mindfulness meditation group received eight weeks of training in mindfulness meditation, while the control group did not receive any training. At the end of the eight weeks, the mindfulness meditation group showed significant improvements in cognitive function, such as attention, memory, and executive function.

4. **Chiesa, A., Calati, R., & Serretti, A. (2011). Does mindfulness training improve cognitive abilities? A systematic review of neuropsychological findings. Clinical psychology review, 31(3), 449-464.**

This review article examines the research on the effects of mindfulness training on cognitive abilities. The authors reviewed 20 studies that investigated the effects of mindfulness training on a variety of cognitive abilities, including attention, memory, and executive function. The authors found that mindfulness training was associated with significant improvements in cognitive abilities in both healthy and clinical populations.

5. **Vujanovic, A. A., Arch, J. J., & Ayalon, A. (2010). Mindfulness meditation for the treatment of chronic pain: A review of the literature. Journal of Pain, 11(10), 989-1004.**

This review article examines the research on the use of mindfulness meditation for the treatment of chronic pain. The authors reviewed 14 studies that investigated the effects of mindfulness meditation on chronic pain. The authors found that mindfulness meditation was associated with significant improvements in pain severity, pain-related disability, and quality of life.

6. Neuroscience of Mindfulness Meditation, written by WiNSS Scholar Feiyi Wang

This **studies** exciting findings and potential concerns emerge as neuroscience research in mindfulness meditation grow in both scale and depth. Studies indicated that several brain regions that involve functions such as attention allocation, emotional regulation, and self- awareness exhibit activation patterns that differ in mindfulness meditators. One study also found that practitioners of mindfulness meditation have decelerated brain tissue loss as they age compared to non-meditators. Future research is needed to replicate and confirm these findings, and more importantly, explore the mechanisms underlying the impacts of meditation on our brain and mind.

Sources (info)

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3. www.researchgate.net/publication/261985282_Lomas_T_2014_Masculinity_Meditation_and_Mental_Health
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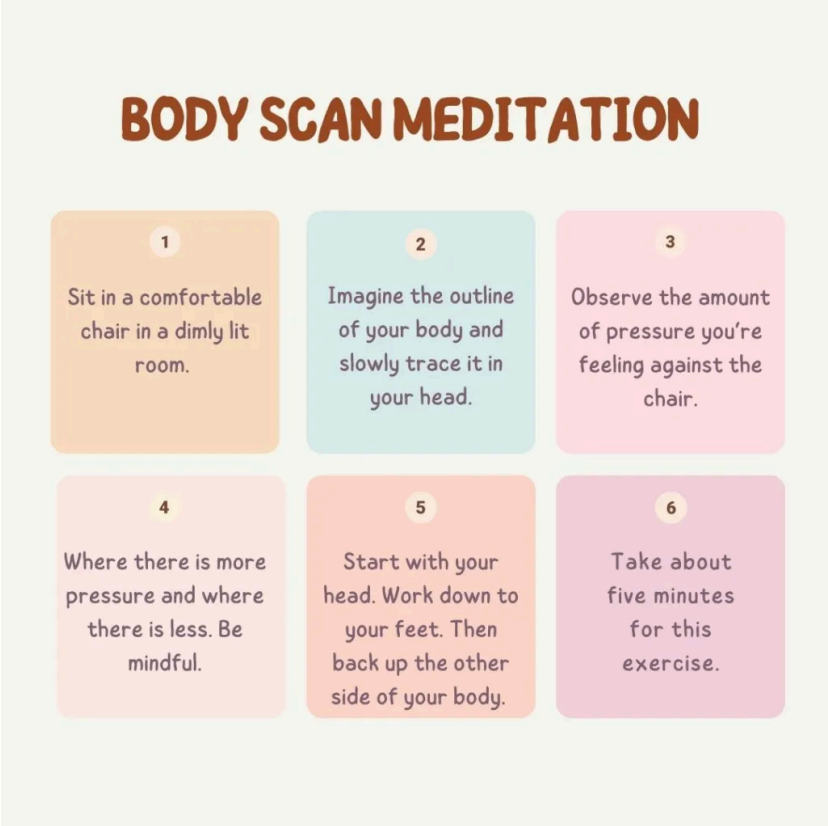
Resources


BODY SCAN MEDITATION
1
Sit in a comfortable chair in a dimly lit room.
2
Imagine the outline of your body and slowly trace it in your head.
3
Observe the amount of pressure you're feeling against the chair.
4
Where there is more pressure and where there is less. Be mindful.
5
Start with your head. Work down to your feet. Then back up the other side of your body.
6
Take about five minutes for this exercise.

- **PTSD resources**
- **The National Center for PTSD: https://www.ptsd.va.gov/**
- **The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN): https://www.rainn.org/**
- **The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): https://www.nami.org/**
- **The American Psychological Association: https://www.apa.org/**

- **Prison Yoga Project – 200hr Yoga Teachgers Training:** https://community.prisonyoga.org/courses/yoga-social-justice-and-leadership-a-200-hour-yoga-teacher-training/

You can also find a therapist in your area by visiting the Psychology Today therapist directory: **https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists**

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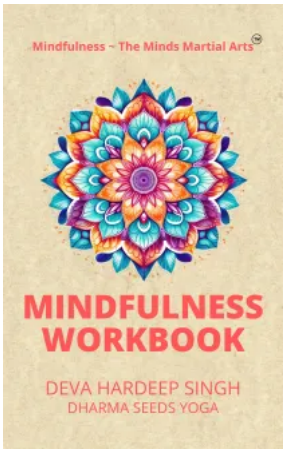

Coming in July 2023

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to the present moment, without judgment. It is a way of training the mind to focus and to be aware of our thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Meditation is a form of mindfulness that involves sitting quietly and focusing on the breath.The Mind's Martial Arts™ is a mindfulness workbook that can help you to learn the basics of mindfulness and meditation. The workbook is divided into three sections:

- The first section introduces the basics of mindfulness, such as what mindfulness is, why it is beneficial, and how to get started.
- The second section provides a variety of mindfulness exercises, including guided meditations, breathing exercises, and body scans.
- The third section provides tips for integrating mindfulness into your daily life.

The Mind's Martial Arts™ is a comprehensive and easy-to-follow guide to mindfulness. It is a great resource for anyone who is interested in learning how to be more mindful.Mindfulness is a skill that can be learned and practiced.Mindfulness is a powerful tool that can help you to live a happier, healthier, and more fulfilling life. With regular practice, you can learn to control your thoughts and emotions, improve your focus, and increase your happiness

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Deva Hardeep Singh (he/him; neurodivergent, gay, ability injured, post-traumatic stress injury, borderline personality injury) is an Oklahoman, a **Yuchi Indian**, enrolled in the **Muscogee Nation**, and studied radio/TV/film in college. He's worked as an on-air personality, author, poet, artist, administrative assistant, petroleum landman, barista, staff writer, paralegal, concert promoter, music artist manager, content producer, and graphic designer. He spent 6 months as a National Data Team volunteer for the Bernie Sanders for President campaign. He is a freelance journalist with International papers and magazines with a social justice focus. Recently was able to join the Hulu/FX Series **Reservation Dogs**, as an extra (Seasons 2 & 3) He's been a meditator for over 30 years (Buddhist, Chan, Zen), teaches meditation, and provides yoga instruction, and a Reiki III Master.

Find Deva on World Yoga Federation

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